



Cemetery Records

Joan E. Healey, Research Specialist, AG®

FamilySearch
healeyje@familysearch.org

Cemetery records often include birth, marriage, and death information and clues to military service, religion, membership in an organization, and more.

Cemetery tombstones or sexton's records, usually give death date, and age or birth date. Sometimes they give birth place. Spouse and children who died young are often buried nearby.

Check every person buried in the plot, as they may be close relatives.

Are two buried in same plot – mother and child; both dying at childbirth.

USE CEMETERY RECORDS TO:

- Identify children who died young or who were not recorded in birth or death records.
- Establish family relationships and learn of family members.
- Find clues that lead you to other records about the person. For example:
 - Tombstones may have symbols, abbreviations, or insignias indicating military service, social, or religious affiliations.
- Learn the names of deceased parents
- Birth date and place; death date and age
- Family names (spouse and children)

The Association of Gravestone Studies (AGS) has recommendation on the treatment and care of tombstone when needing to make inscriptions more visible.

Several types of cemetery records are available. Cemeteries may have Sexton or caretakers, who have kept records of the names and dates of those buried and maps of the burial plots. Some churches have kept burial records that may give birth, marriage, and other family or health details. Tombstones or grave stones may also exist, or the information on them may have been transcribed.

1. Family members may be buried in the same plot or nearby.
2. Weathering and damaged to tombstones make early published transcriptions priceless.

TYPES OF CEMETERIES

- Family, home or private
- Church
- Historic: Fort, parks or museums
- Government / Community: town, county, state, and national
- Military: There are over 37 overseas cemeteries and memorials, for soldiers who died during service to their country. There are over 60,000 graves overseas of soldiers who died serving in World War I.
- Organization: fraternal
- Corporate, Commercial "Memorial Gardens"
- Ethnic
- Fraternal
- Military
- Mass graves - natural disaster, widespread epidemic – records seldom kept

Types of Care for Human Burial: earth burial, sea, donation to science, cremation, and cryogenic suspension (1961-present)

Cemetery burial records, sometimes called **permits for burial**, often include birth, marriage, and death information. They sometimes provide clues about military service, religion, or membership in an organization, such as a lodge. These records are especially helpful for identifying children who died young or women who were not recorded in family or government documents. Check the **sexton's records**, (burial permit, lot purchase, maps, and plots) or visit the cemetery in person to see if other relatives are in the same or adjoining plots.

To find tombstone or sexton records, you need to know where an individual was buried. You can **find clues to burial places** in death certificate, funeral notices and programs, obituaries, church records, funeral home records, death records and County deeds.

Related Records

Hospital, life insurance, social security (1935-present), deeds, plat maps, library – newspapers: obituary, report of accidents: car, train, plain, industrial - mine, reports police and murder and criminal. Articles giving court information, institution (poor house), correctional (Jail), and other facilities

Coroner's report, probate records, land records, grave stone, perpetual care, and roadside memorials.

SOURCES OF CEMETERY RECORDS

- The present sexton, funeral home, or minister may have the burial registers and the records of the burial plots.
- A local library, historical society, or local historian, may have the records or can help you locate obscure family plots or relocated cemeteries. Cemetery associations sometimes publish inventories or transcripts for their areas.

- Sextons' records and transcripts of tombstone information that have been published, often in local genealogical periodicals. (See the periodical indexes listed in United States Periodicals in the FamilySearch Wiki **and** FamilySearch Catalog)
- Lists of soldiers' graves, described in U.S. Military Records.

TERMS

Cenotaph: engraved on a tombstone indicates an empty grave, with the stone erected in memory or in honor of a person buried elsewhere. It often indicates a stone erected in honor of a person lost at sea."

Abbreviations are often used on headstones. A list of abbreviations, including military abbreviations, is available on [Rootsweb](#).

LOCATING CEMETERIES

- Maps
- GPS
- County highway maps
- Early county maps and atlases
- County and town histories
- Land records: deeds
- Government officials (city, county, parish, state, and federal)
- Church officials
- Mortuary & Funeral directors
- Local historians
- Residents
- Information gained from obituaries, death certificates, mortuary funeral cards, and city directories

The Family History Library has cemetery records listed in the Locality Search of the FamilySearch Catalog under [STATE], [COUNTY] - Cemeteries

The library has a few funeral home records listed in the Locality Search of the **FamilySearch Catalog** under the following:

[STATE], [COUNTY] - BUSINESS RECORDS AND COMMERCE
 [STATE], [COUNTY] - FUNERAL HOMES
 [STATE], [COUNTY], [TOWN] - BUSINESS RECORDS AND COMMERCE
 [STATE], [COUNTY], [TOWN] - FUNERAL HOMES

CEMETERY ADDRESSES

You can find the addresses of many cemeteries in:

- ***Cemeteries of the U.S.: A Guide to Contact Information for U.S. Cemeteries and Their Records***. First Edition. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research, 1994. Lists over 22,000 operating and inactive cemeteries. Alphabetical by state, county, and cemetery name. Entries may list physical location or mailing address, phone and fax numbers, contact

information for cemetery record keepers, years of operation, religious and other affiliations.

- Funeral directors in the area where your ancestors lived may have records similar to death and cemetery records. Most of their addresses are in the:
 - *American Blue Book of Funeral Directors*. New York, New York: National Funeral Directors Association, biennial. Funeral Home Records
- Kot, Elizabeth Gorrell. *United States Cemetery Address Book, 1994-1995*. Vallejo, California: Indices Publishing, 1994. (Family History Library book 973 V34k.) Lists over 25,000 cemetery addresses and locations. Alphabetical by state, town, and cemetery name.
- [Online US cemetery registry](#)

ONLINE

- [AfricanAmericanCemeteries.com](#)
- [BillionGraves.com](#) - Provides photos and GPS locations of grave markers.
- [Find A Grave Home page](#)
- [Cyndi's List](#) - Cemeteries & funeral homes
- [Histopolis](#) - a useful cemetery and grave locator. - Grave index (top of page).
- [Interment.net](#)
- [NamesInStone.com](#)
- [Rootsweb](#)
- [UsGenweb.org](#)
- [Usgwtombstones.org](#)
- [Veteran's Nationwide Gravesite Locator](#)
- GeneaSearch-Cemetery records Online: [geneasearch.com/ceneteries.htm](#)
- Google earth <http://isalouisecooke.com/2015/03/how-to-find-cemeteries-in-google-earth/>
- [Gravematter](#) - Photos and historic information on colonial cemeteries and gravestones of New England - southern Maine and New Hampshire and northeast Massachusetts.

FAMILYSEARCH RESEARCH WIKI

Has articles for each state concerning cemeteries, [with links to online cemeteries, and references.](#)

In the FamilySearch Research WIKI search type

- United States Cemetery Records
- _____ State Cemetery Records